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ABSTRACT

Many educators and researchers are discussing a shift in national education from an "instruction" paradigm emphasizing measuring inputs and providing instruction to a "learning" paradigm emphasizing outputs and producing learning. The question is how can Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) smoothly shift educational paradigms. A clarification of local goals through ongoing dialogue and assessment is vital to both the continued success of local programs and their abilities to contribute to WAC and educational reform at a national level. Using E. Guba and Y. Lincoln's "Fourth Generation Evaluation" to craft, integrate, and assess a WAC program customized to complement the unique context of its home institution, an advisory committee of 14 members designed a WAC program. B. Walvoord's "Writing across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs" was used to review the Training Model, the Conversion Model, the Problem-Solving Model, and the Faculty Dialogue Model. An Emergent Model for Integrating WAC includes a tool for integrating WAC into the various disciplines of the college, enabling involvement for almost every member of the faculty. Its components are: case study, with data collection from three sources (triangulation): faculty, college's public the Curriculum (WAC) smoothly shift educational paradigms? A clarification of documents, and contextual observations; determination of the WAC mission for use by each department's needs; intra-departmental negotiation; college-wide workshops to raise awareness and promote faculty dialogue; and context integration, in assessing the missions and objectives of the WAC program. (Contains 7 references; sample faculty dialogue model and Emergent Model for Integrating WAC are appended.) (CR)

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Debbie L. Siebert 1997

A Qualitative Approach to Integrative WAC

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The qualitative research process can be employed to craft, integrate, and assess a writing-across-the-curriculum program customized to complement the unique context of its home institution.

Introduction

In the current political climate where state legislatures and local governing bodies are demanding proof of student learning, educators are struggling to shape the future landscape of national education. And all educational initiatives, including writing across the curriculum, must adapt to survive. Many educators/researchers are discussing a shift in national education from an "instruction" paradigm with an emphasis on measuring inputs and providing instruction to a "learning" paradigm with an emphasis on measuring outputs and producing learning (Barr and Tagg 13). The question becomes how can writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) smoothly shift educational paradigms?

Barbara Walvoord addresses this question in her most recent article in *College English*, "The Future of WAC," where she reflects on WAC's 25 year history and makes predictions about its survival. In this article, Walvoord says that a review of literature reveals an "enemy or threat" framework that may limit WAC's responses to a changing educational landscape. Instead, Walvoord recommends considering the frame of what sociologists call the "social movement organization" for long-range WAC planning ("The Future of WAC" 58). "Movements" are "collective attempts to promote or resist change in a society or group" (Benford 1880). Walvoord contends that WAC fits the movement frame because of its change agenda and collective nature (faculty talking with one another to effect reform). The literature of the social movement organization framework also

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makes an important distinction between macro-level and micro-level choices. Macro-level choices include defining WAC's relationship to other movement organizations and its relationship to the "State" or university administration. Micro-level choices include deciding who is a member, what membership will require, and what will be the organization form; deciding whether organizational strategies will aim primarily at changing personal behavior or at changing structures and organizations; and determining successful tactics for implementing change such as workshops or curricular requirements.

Walvoord claims that our past concentration primarily on micro-level choices has led to the creation of many fairly strong local WAC programs (WAC is and must be uniquely context specific) but has failed to create a national WAC mission or forum for debate that can *inform* local contexts. In addition, the failures of many local WAC programs to define their relationships to university administrations and their propensity for working within the current instructional paradigm instead of transcending it have led to the complete demise or dumbing down of many WAC programs. In order to survive, many WAC programs sell easy-to-implement models maintaining the status quo ("here are some user-friendly strategies for creating writing-intensive courses that students need to meet the current degree requirements") instead of negotiating models effecting real change ("let's discuss the possibility of incorporating WAC/critical thinking strategies in many classes, which may involve worthwhile time and effort, to produce student learning").

Walvoord, therefore, advises us not only to become part of a national education reform movement but also to create spaces within the institution where this "movement style work" may be done ("Future of WAC" 69). After all, considering macro-level issues

may assist in strengthening the position of change agents within local contexts. To create such spaces, however, these local change agents must also clarify their goals to themselves and to the college administration. A clarification of local goals through ongoing dialogue and assessment is vital to both the continued success of local programs and their abilities to contribute to WAC and educational reform at a national level.

In this article, we use Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln's *Fourth Generation Evaluation* to demonstrate how qualitative research can be employed to craft, integrate, and assess a writing-across-the-curriculum program customized to complement the unique context of its home institution. Included in our discussion is a blueprint for ongoing programmatic improvement and assessment of the institution's WAC program. Guba and Lincoln's *Fourth Generation Evaluation* provides one approach to program integration that helps to clarify and assess local goals through a hermeneutic dialectic and negotiation process--a decentralized approach that increases the likelihood that all parties involved in the WAC program will feel ownership of and become engaged with the program evolving at their institution. The other models we reviewed seemed to lack a systematic tool for truly integrating WAC into the comprehensive context of the College, a process vital to the identification of emerging writing themes or outputs and to the assessment of those outputs both within the local context and against the backdrop of this national debate.

Other Models

We reviewed the following four models described by Barbara E. Walvoord in *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs*: the Training Model, the Conversion Model, the Problem-Solving Model, and the Faculty Dialogue Model. In

the Training Model, WAC is envisioned as "training" for "untrained" faculty (Walvoord, "Getting Started" 15). The terms imply that there are certain skills or procedures that workshop leaders will train faculty to implement, after which faculty will go out and implement, mechanically, what they have been trained to do. The Conversion Model assumes that faculty in other disciplines are "heathen who must be converted to the Right Way" (Walvoord, "Getting Started" 15). Both the training and the conversion models may lead to faculty name-calling (Hey you, in that other building across the street, you don't even know what writing *is)*. These models also imply all teaching methods are uniform (integrating writing into history is *just* like integrating writing into engineering). In the Problem-Solution Model, several writing problems are identified that WAC is supposed to eradicate (Walvoord, "Getting Started" 16). But if WAC is only seen as a solution to a problem, then if WAC is successful, all of these problems will disappear. Many programs based on this model die when they "fail" to produce the desired results. The Faculty Dialogue Model is the most common. The goal of this model is to explore language and learning on a particular campus through a series of faculty seminars (Walvoord, "Getting Started" 14). Faculty dialogue then becomes the "wellspring for changes" in teaching and curricular design (Walvoord, "Getting Started" 14).

Although the more traditional Faculty Dialogue Model raises awareness through faculty seminars, it lacks a comprehensive, systematic method for integrating WAC. How *exactly* does faculty dialogue become the "wellspring" for curricular change or assessment? In the end, this traditional model relies on the centralized decision making of the Advisory Committee (see Appendix A) to determine the WAC program's mission,

goals, and objectives and to assess its effectiveness. We felt this model needed a *complement*, some component systematically enabling more faculty members to contribute to the WAC program's design, implementation, and assessment.

Project Background

The Manager of the Writing Center was charged with coordinating the College's WAC program. The manager started by selecting 14 members, each of whom represented an area of the College, to serve on an Advisory Committee. The Institutional Researcher was one of those selected members. When we and the Advisory Committee first started discussing WAC, implementing a WAC program at the College seemed like a relatively simple task. (And why should anyone make more of a project than is absolutely necessary for that project's success?) Many at the College found a common definition of "writing across the curriculum"—the integration of writing into various content areas—especially encouraging. After all, many faculty were already incorporating writing into their course curriculum—in one sense, WAC was already underway.

Three main questions about implementing a *comprehensive* WAC program at the College, however, readily came to mind:

- First, where do we want WAC to take us?
  - What goals are possible for WAC?
  - Although many WAC programs share two common goals—to use writing as a heuristic for learning in the content areas and to improve students' writing skills—are these appropriate goals for the College?
  - What are the faculty's goals for writing, and how can a WAC mission statement best represent their goals?
  - How exactly will the WAC mission and program goals be aligned with the mission and current institution-wide planning?
  - And what about the other writing programs on campus--how will WAC be aligned with the developmental writing and composition programs?

- Second, after we know where we are going, how will we get there?
  What are possible strategies for implementing WAC at the College?
  How exactly do faculty use writing as a tool?
  How can we assist other interested faculty in incorporating writing into their curriculum?
  Do effective strategies for integrating writing into sociology also work, for let's say, integrating writing into engineering?
  How exactly can we integrate writing into the various disciplines?

- This brings us to a third and important question: How will we know that we have arrived at our destination?
  How exactly does an institution assess the effectiveness of its WAC program?

While the Advisory Committee struggled with these questions, it was encouraging to know that many WAC program developers must ask themselves these same questions. The designs of WAC programs are as various as the number of institutions that implement them—each institution must craft its own model to complement its unique context. According to Toby Fulwiler and Art Young, who have directed WAC programs for over a decade and have been prominent in the growth of WAC, no single model for WAC will work at all institutions (1). Logic suggests that the success of any program depends on its ability to become woven into the fabric of its home institution, to become a natural part of that institution's context.

While we all acknowledged the importance of discussing these context specific issues, many of us at the College were extremely motivated to implement *immediately* a comprehensive WAC program meeting the needs of its context. Members of the Board of Consultants of the National Network of Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs advise program developers to temper their energy and to allow time for reflection—time for faculty dialogue and consensus building and time for planning (McLeod and Soven 31).

The advisor to the WAC program at Robert Morris College aptly compares designing a WAC program to strategic planning: "Planning to build institution-wide writing-across-the-curriculum programs is very much like strategic planning currently practiced in institutions of higher learning" (Sipple 44). We decided to heed these experts' advice and began to research other WAC programs and to explore the campus context.

Emergent Model for Integrating WAC

The Emergent Model for Integrating WAC (see Appendix B) that is proposed provides such a complement to the Faculty Dialogue Model. Our model depends on a *decentralized* approach to program integration. This approach includes a tool, informed by the methodology of Guba and Lincoln's *Fourth Generation*, for integrating WAC into the various disciplines of the College--a tool that enables almost every faculty member on campus to become involved, to "get into" the context of the College and to interact with other faculty members. This model is not a prescriptive device but an enabling process.

The Emergent Model for Integrating WAC is informed by the qualitative methodology of Guba and Lincoln's *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Qualitative research can be defined as the process of sustained, concerted, reflective observation and identification of emerging themes through the data analysis of multiple sources unique to a particular context. The following components comprise the Emergent Model.

Case study

Qualitative research generally involves the collection of data from three sources (triangulation) to write a case study, enabling stakeholders to analyze and assess context-specific needs. The sources we used were faculty, the College's public documents, and

contextual observations. We interviewed the Writing Center/Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Advisory Committee members and other stakeholders purposively identified by the Advisory Committee; we taped and transcribed these interviews after stakeholders signed a consent form that ensured confidentiality. In addition, we analyzed the College's public documents (e.g., *Strategic Plan 1992-1997* and the *Outcomes Assessment Plan*) and made observations about the internal and external factors that affect the Owens context (e.g., state mandated service standards). From these sources, we identified data units and grouped them according to common properties, which revealed the emerging writing needs and expectations. Once the writing needs and expectations were identified, we wrote a case study that describes the context of the institution and the emerging themes and that would form the basis for open "negotiation" by the stakeholders in crafting a mission and in assessing the WAC program.

WAC Mission

The outcomes of the needs assessment would help determine the WAC mission, goals, and objectives, the engine of the WAC program. Using Guba and Lincoln's hermeneutic dialectic process, stakeholders negotiate the case study and craft the mission of the WAC program. Each department on campus may take this engine and design writing across the curriculum to fulfill department-specific needs.

Intra-departmental Negotiation

Guba and Lincoln's methodology enables *each* department to analyze their specific context, culture, and writing needs. Departments may take the WAC mission, goals, and objectives and craft a unique design through departmental negotiation.

Workshops

Workshops raise awareness and promote dialogue about writing across the curriculum. Teams of faculty presenters discuss WAC principles with other faculty in a series of college-wide WAC workshops, enabling faculty to sharpen their perceptions not only about what is means to write within their own disciplines but also to gain a better understanding about what it means to write within the disciplines of others. Participating faculty continue these discussions in other college-wide and department-specific forums.

Context Integration

While workshops promote dialogue about writing across the curriculum, the case study becomes a "living document" as College participants continually re-negotiate not only their own departmental objectives but also the mission and objectives of the WAC program. In addition to enabling *each* department to analyze their specific context, culture, and writing needs, Guba and Lincoln's methodology also fuels a blueprint for ongoing programmatic improvement and assessment.

We choose this model because the Emergent Model offers a *decentralized* approach to achieving the mission, goals, and objectives of WAC program and to the identification of needs, barriers, and expectations. In addition to the more traditional Faculty Dialogue model, the Emergent Model offers a promotion of ownership and awareness, a tool for integration (case study is a "living document" and a tool for negotiation within departments), and fuel for strategic planning (e.g., promotion of writing as a measure of general education competencies).

Conclusion

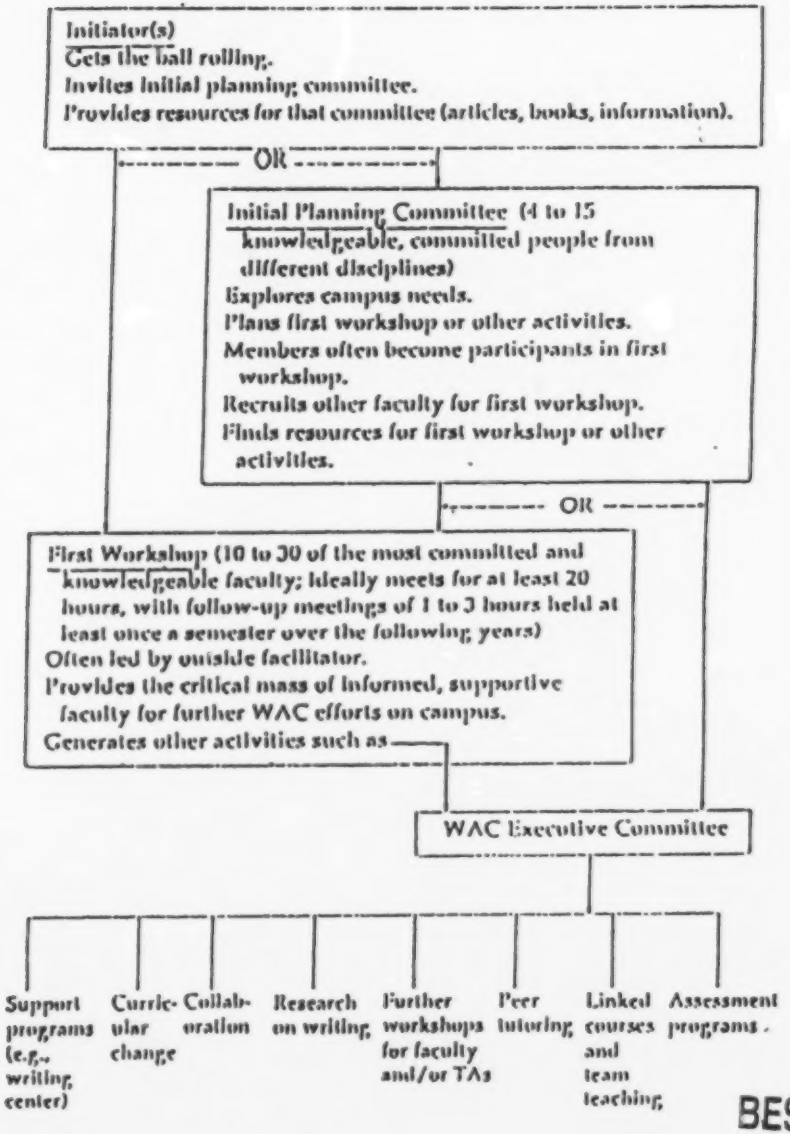
Although we don't want to make more out of WAC than is really necessary for its continued success, a well-developed plan is a vital component of an effective WAC program, a WAC program not isolated but integrated into the comprehensive context of the College. A thoughtful plan will enable WAC participants to contribute their time and energy to a program beneficial to both students and faculty and that participants know will last. In addition, a stronger clarification of local goals and a means of assessing those goals will serve to strengthen the complex interplay between local contexts and the raging national debate about educational reform.

The Challenge

In retrospect, our study should have been more inclusive. The focus question that guided our research, "What are Owens' writing needs and faculty expectations for writing in their classes?" was too narrow. Instead, the question should have been, "What are faculty expectations for student learning?" This question could have been an umbrella not only for determining and assessing the general education competencies (one of which is writing) but also for promoting dialogue about their implementation, especially about the structural changes that could facilitate this process. According to Walvoord, the future of WAC may depend on its ability to become integrated with other reform movements (e.g., interdisciplinary ventures, assessment) (Walvoord, "Future of WAC" 70). In the future, it would be interesting to use Guba and Lincoln's *Fourth Generation Evaluation* to guide such a research project.

Appendix A

Faculty Dialogue Model


Initiator(s)
Gets the ball rolling.
Invites initial planning committee.
Provides resources for that committee (articles, books, information).
OR
Initial Planning Committee (4 to 15 knowledgeable, committed people from different disciplines)
Explores campus needs.
Plans first workshop or other activities.
Members often become participants in first workshop.
Recruits other faculty for first workshop.
Finds resources for first workshop or other activities.
OR
First Workshop (10 to 30 of the most committed and knowledgeable faculty; ideally meets for at least 20 hours, with follow-up meetings of 1 to 3 hours held at least once a semester over the following years)
Often led by outside facilitator.
Provides the critical mass of informed, supportive faculty for further WAC efforts on campus.
Generates other activities such as
WAC Executive Committee
Support programs (e.g., writing center)
Curricular change
Collaboration
Research on writing
Further workshops for faculty and/or TAs
Peer tutoring
Linked courses and team teaching
Assessment programs

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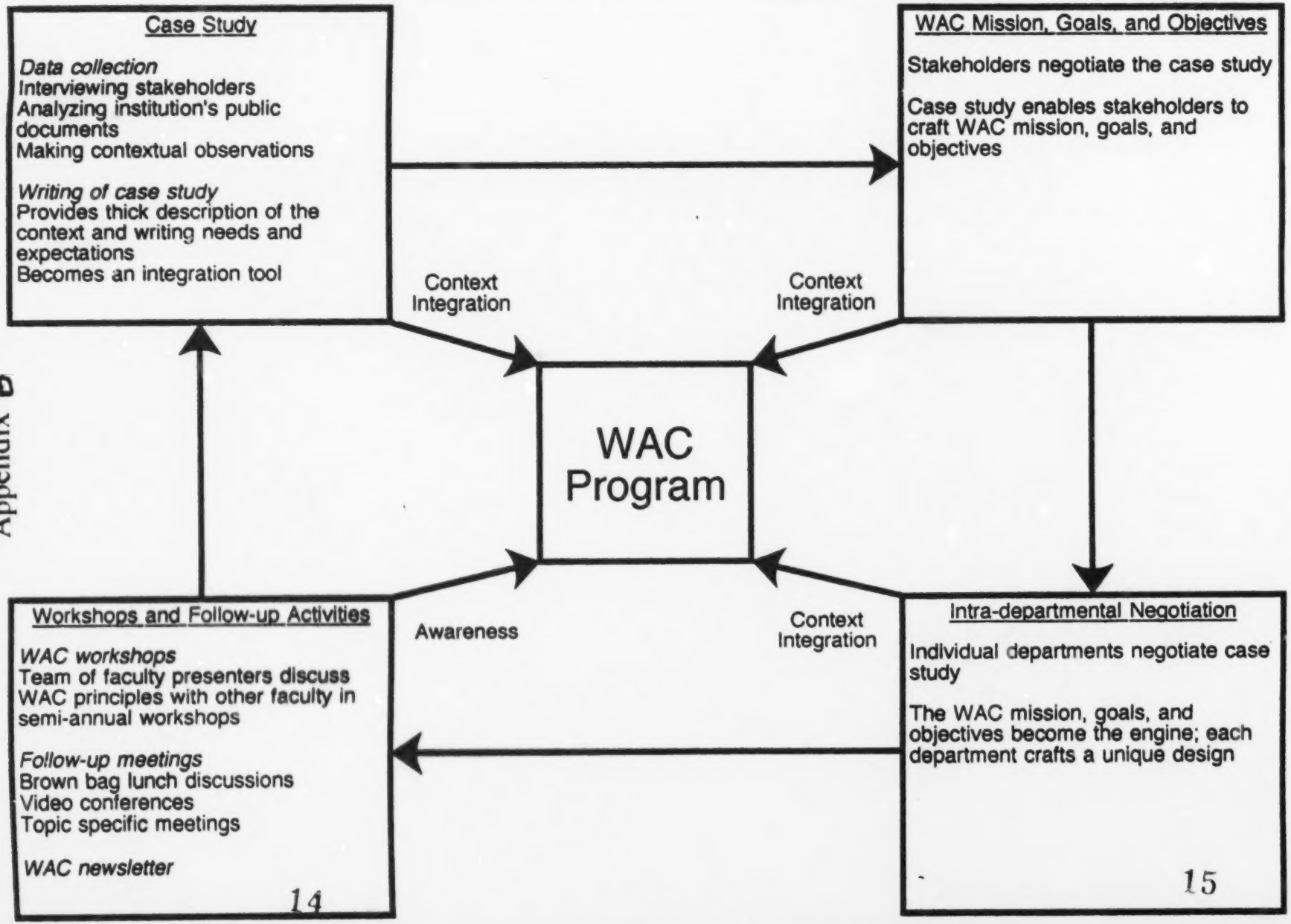
An Emergent Model for Integrating WAC


Case Study
Data collection
Interviewing stakeholders
Analyzing institution's public documents
Making contextual observations
Writing of case study
Provides thick description of the context and writing needs and expectations
Becomes an integration tool
WAC Mission, Goals, and Objectives
Stakeholders negotiate the case study
Case study enables stakeholders to craft WAC mission, goals, and objectives
Context Integration
Context Integration
WAC Program
Workshops and Follow-up Activities
WAC workshops
Team of faculty presenters discuss WAC principles with other faculty in semi-annual workshops
Follow-up meetings
Brown bag lunch discussions
Video conferences
Topic specific meetings
WAC newsletter
14
Awareness
Context Integration
Intra-departmental Negotiation
Individual departments negotiate case study
The WAC mission, goals, and objectives become the engine; each department crafts a unique design
15

Appendix B

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